What you need to know about iCBT

We all have that little voice in our head that constantly comments, approves, criticizes and forms conclusions. This is what's called self-talk or automatic thinking and it affects our decisions, actions, attitudes and most importantly, how we think and feel about ourselves. When that inner voice is optimistic, positive and kind, we have a good self-image and high self-esteem. As a result, we are likely optimistic, better able to solve problems, bounce back from adversity, and have healthy relationships with others. However, when that voice is pessimistic, negative, critical or even abusive, the opposite occurs. As a consequence, we may talk ourselves out of opportunities, set ourselves up for failure and expect little from ourselves and life, making us anxious and sad.

Changing our negative self-talk can help us better manage stressful situations, improve our confidence and self-esteem and enhance the quality of our lives. One way to do this is with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

Cognitive behavioral therapy

For several decades, CBT has been an effective tool in treating many mental health disorders, especially depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Today, it is the most common type of psychotherapy. It involves a mental health professional helping an individual become aware of inaccurate or negative thinking, seeing challenging situations more clearly, and developing more effective coping skills.

Negative space

We all experience negative thinking at times. These include:

- Emotional reasoning – "I feel like a failure so I must be a failure."
- Jumping to conclusions – "Claire hardly speaks to me. She obviously doesn't like me."
- All-or-nothing thinking – "If I can't do something perfectly then I'm not doing it."
- Mental filtering – "Yes, I scored five goals but I totally screwed up three shots!"
- Over generalizing – "Nothing ever goes right for me!"
- Labeling – "I'm such a loser."

CBT tries to replace these with more realistic and healthy thinking and has been shown to not only retrain the brain but rewire it.

A new era

Technology has ushered in a whole new era of mental health care – and CBT. Many people remain reluctant to try traditional, face-to-face psychotherapy because of time constraints, illness, embarrassment, and fear of stigma. For those living in more rural or remote locations, having access to trained mental health professionals is difficult if not impossible. These barriers have been removed thanks to Internet-Delivered Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (iCBT).

iCBT

iCBT involves a trained mental health professional and a client communicating online and/or by phone. This can include email, text and in-app messaging, video, and more. In addition to counseling, people complete exercises and tasks, practice new skills, interact with resources including articles, videos, and audio (music or podcasts) from any location at any time. Unlike traditional psychotherapy, iCBT is more goal-oriented and short-term, making it highly effective for mild to moderate depression and anxiety or dealing with particular stressful life events.

iCBT has rapidly become the preferred option for people of all ages and backgrounds – but especially with Millennials. For a generation that has grown up with digital technology – social media, smartphones, video games, and instant access to information – iCBT fits their needs. It is flexible, customizable, portable and available 24/7.

This new way of delivering mental health care is also becoming increasingly popular with organizational leaders and employees. For managers, iCBT helps employees stay healthy, engaged, and at work. For employees, iCBT reduces stigma, fear and embarrassment and provides immediate, and private, access to care – no waiting for referrals or appointments and no taking time off work. Understanding that support is literally at their fingertips through a smartphone app helps people feel in control of their own mental health care.

The future of mental health care

iCBT has become so widely accepted that mental health organizations and Employee Assistance Programs are developing new technologies, interactive apps, and other digital tools to further enhance online mental health care, support, and therapy. Recently, online group therapy and specialized programs for children and youth have become part of many iCBT offerings.

Thanks to technology, people around the world can now access therapy, resources, and information whenever and wherever they like at little to no cost. iCBT is not only effective – it's empowering people to take charge of their own well-being. If you'd like more information on iCBT or would like to talk to a therapist online, contact your Employee Assistance Program.